

ARTICLE APPEARED
ON PAGE 8 Sec 1

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U.S. denies massacre report

New York Times News Service

WASHINGTON—Reagan administration and congressional officials denied Sunday a report published in the London Sunday Times that the United States knew a massacre was underway in two Palestinian refugee camps before the killings ended.

Senior intelligence officials said the U.S. government first learned about the killings on Saturday, Sept. 18, the day the killings ended.

The London newspaper, quoting unidentified U.S. intelligence officials, said word of the killings first reached the U.S. government the night of Thursday, Sept. 16, and members of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee were informed the next morning.

Sen. Joseph Biden (D., Del.), a

member of the Senate's Foreign Relations and Intelligence Committees, said Sunday that neither committee had learned of the massacre until Sept. 18.

A FOREIGN Relations Committee staff member, who asked not to be identified, recalled that one colleague told committee members late on Sept. 17 that he had heard rumors of a massacre in Beirut. When the committee asked the State Department, the staff member said Sunday, the department responded that it too had heard rumors and was trying to find out whether they were true.

Neither the department nor the committee, however, learned a massacre had taken place until Sept. 18, the staff member said.